From the OEP

This week, we are proud to release the OEP's 2010 Report Card. Released annually, the Report Card highlights the condition of Arkansas education in several areas of interest to parents, educators, and policymakers. In past years (click here to see last year’s report card), we've examined not only test scores, but also such topics as graduation rates, school accountability, and teacher pay. This year, we update some areas we've examined previously and introduce a few new topics. We highlight the most recent state benchmark results, as well as updating results for end-of-course exams and state ACT results. New to this year's Report Card, we examine achievement gaps between various subgroups on the reading portion of the NAEP, levels of educational attainment for Arkansans as a whole, patterns of education spending for Arkansas and surrounding areas, and changes in the demographics of Arkansas students over the last ten-plus years.

We hope you will find the OEP 2010 Report Card informative and useful. If you have comments, visit the OEP Blog and let us know what you think. Have a great rest of the week!

News from Around the Natural State

State Switching to New Graduation Rate System

Arkansas is moving to a new system for calculating high school graduation rates that will require better tracking of students, as well as reporting students by race, ethnicity, family income and special needs. The more rigorous graduation-rate calculations will play a greater role in determining whether high schools are identified by the state as needing improvement. Arkansas will get a first look at the new calculations for its schools and school districts when the “preliminary” rates appear on the 2010 Arkansas School Performance Report that is soon to be posted on the state Department of Education website.

Anti-Consolidation Bill Fails by One Vote

A bill that would end mandatory school consolidation based solely on student population failed by one vote in the House. House Bill 2010 by Rep. Jon Hubbard, R-Jonesboro, failed in a 50-33 vote. The bill would change the state’s school consolidation law, which dictates mandatory consolidation or annexation of a district that has fewer than 350 students for two straight years. Act 60 of 2003, which includes this provision on school consolidation, was adopted as part of wide-ranging school reforms in response to a court order declaring the state’s public school funding system unconstitutional. Hubbard’s bill would shield districts that fall below the consolidation threshold if they are academically, fiscally and structurally sound.

10 Students from Arkansas Awarded Merit Scholarships

Ten Arkansas high school seniors are among 700 students nationally who have won National Achievement Scholarships for scholastically talented black students. The $2,500 individual awards are financed by the National Merit Scholarship Corp., a not-for-profit organization that operates
without government assistance. More than 160,000 students entered the 2011 National Achievement Scholarship Program by requesting consideration when they took the 2009 Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test as high school juniors. The Arkansas students, their high schools, and their probable fields of study are:

**Keiara L. Turner**, Forrest City High School, accounting.

**Destiny L. Hemphill**, Conway High, education (African/African American studies).

**Autumn L. Henderson**, Forrest City High, law.

**Johannah C. Walker**, Fort Smith Southside High, physical therapy.

**Miriam L. Pearsall**, Little Rock Parkview Arts and Science Magnet High, chemical engineering.

**Taylor D. Stevens**, Little Rock Central High, industrial engineering.

**Nicole A. Barnes**, Marion High, accounting.

**Sheridan M. McKisick** of Sherwood, Little Rock Hall High, international relations.

**Cicely A. Shannon** of Texarkana, AR, and a student at Texas High School in Texarkana, biology/English.

**Dustin L. Walter** of West Memphis, Marion High, medicine.

**Click here to check out these news stories on the new OEP Blog!!!**

**News from Around the Nation**

**Singled-out L.A. Unified Teacher Shares Skills with Colleagues**

Miguel Aguilar was cited as among L.A. Unified's most effective in an L.A. Times article on the 'value-added' evaluation method. Since then, many at his Pacoima school have adopted his methods. But budget cuts threaten his job.

**In Michigan, Tests to Get Tougher as More Kids Pass**

Starting next year, the difficulty level for the Michigan Educational Assessment Program will change to match the difficulty of the National Assessment of Educational Progress, the Detroit Free Press reports. Even though students have been passing the MEAP "in droves," their results on the NAEP, an annual exam given to a selection of students from each state, have lagged.

**Click here to check out these news stories on the new OEP Blog!!!**

**Don't forget, you can always keep up with more education news on the In the News section of our website.**

**Site Seeing**

The OEP has been closely monitoring the Legislative Session this year. Each week, relevant education bills are discussed in committees and then debated on the House and Senate floors. The Arkansas House of Representatives has been broadcasting some committee meetings as well as the session. If you can't make it to Little Rock, this is the next best thing. Just **click here** and look for the "live" designation on the right-hand side menu.
Mark Your Calendar

April 7: Arkansas State House of Representatives Convenes, 9:00 AM State Capitol House Chamber
April 8: University of Arkansas Department of Education Reform Lecture: Rajiv Vinnakota, 12:00 PM, Graduate Education Building Room 343
April 15: Registration Deadline for Decision Making for Results: Data-Driven Decision Making/Data Teams sponsored by the Center for Applied Studies in Education, University of Arkansas, Little Rock
April 15: Issues in Transition to Pension Reform Conference sponsored by the Department of Education Reform at the University of Arkansas. Click here to register

Final Thought(s)

“I believe this, for the first time in our country, creates a common and singular focus on making sure every child exits high school with a diploma and with the opportunity to be successful. If the calculations and documentation and the focus gets us on the pathway to the goal, then it is worth it.” – Charity Smith, ADE Assistant Commissioner for Academic Accountability on the new method for calculating Graduation Rates

Thanks for reading! See you next week!

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